

## HOW TO READ REVELATION

Practical suggestions

Banska Bystrica, 19th April 2015

LITERATURE: WILKINSON & BOA: *Talk Thru the Bible*; MEARS, H. *What the Bible is All About*; HILL, H. *A Journey through the Bible*; PAWSON, D. *Unlocking the Bible*.

### OUTLINE

#### 0. INTRODUCTION: THE LAST BOOK OF THE BIBLE

- 0.1. THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON
- 0.2. DANGERS!
- 0.3. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### 1. OUTLINE

#### 2. WHAT IS CERTAIN

- 2.1. MEGATHEMES
- 2.2. HISTORY
- 2.3. DOCTRINES

#### 3. TO REMEMBER

#### 0. INTRODUCTION: THE LAST BOOK OF THE BIBLE

##### 0.1. THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

- (1) the gospels, (2) Acts - history, (3) the letters of Paul, (4) catholic/general letters (5) the Revelation

##### 0.2. DANGERS!

###### 0.2.1. *“TOO HARD TO READ”*

- neglect; doubt

###### 0.2.2. *“TOO FASCINATING NOT TO SPECULATE”*

- lost in detailed exposition: “666”; “timetable”;
- trying “one’s own hand” in exposition...

##### 0.3. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

###### 0.3.1. *TITLE*

- Greek “apokalypsis” ἀποκαλυψις – “revelation, disclosure, unveiling” = not a catastrophic story

###### 0.3.2. *DATE, AUTHOR*

- [ESV] “Irenaeus reports, on the basis of earlier sources, that “John received the Revelation almost in our own time, toward the end of the reign of Domitian” (Against Heresies 5.30.3). Since Domitian’s reign ended in a.d. 96, most scholars date Revelation in the mid-90s.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ESV, Introduction

- [PAWSON] "...the 'inferior Greek', compared to his normal fluency. It was written hurriedly in very distracting circumstances. Imagine watching a film and being told to 'get it all down on paper', while it was being shown."

### 0.3.3. THE GENRE: APOCALYPTIC

- Pictures; metaphors; symbols; allusions...
- characteristics of the apocalyptic literature: (1) visual, (2) dramatic, (3) "black-and-white" contrast, (4) victory and judgment

### 0.3.4. AUTHORITY

- The style, grammar and vocabulary are quite different from the other writings of John, some think it comes from another "John"
- The church did not accept it as canonical for some time

### 0.3.5. DIFFICULTIES

- probably the most difficult book of the Bible (1) to accept, (2) to expound
- (1) accept
  - Luther: 'neither apostolic nor prophetic...
  - Calvin: omitted it from his New Testament commentary
  - the cosmic war → on which side do I stand?
  - encouragement: **Rev 1:3** Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.
- (2) expound
  - several approaches: (1) Preterist, (2) Historicist, (3) Futurist, – amillennialist; premillennialist; postmillennialist... (4) Idealist
  - [ESV] "The general movement of the book is from "the things that are"—the first-century churches' present situation (chs. 2–3)—to "the things that are to take place after this," climaxing with the destruction of the enemies of God and his church and the presentation of the church as the Lamb's bride in a new heaven and earth (1:19; 4:1)."
  - Parallel book to Genesis:<sup>2</sup>

#### Genesis

**Creation** of the heavens and the earth.

Shows us the earthly **paradise**, with the tree of life and the river of blessing, lost through sin.

We see the first **man and his wife** set over all God's creation.

We are told of the first typical sacrificial **lamb**.

We learn of the beginning of sin, when the **serpent** first entered the garden of delight to beguile "Adam and Eve with his sophistries.

We have earth's first murderer, the first polygamist, the first rebel, the first drunkard, blasphemer, and all others who are in full **rejection** of the Saviour.

We view the rise of Babel, or **Babylon**.

Here is a **man's city**.

Shows how sorrow, death, **trouble, pain and tears**, the inevitable accompaniments of sin and rebellion, came into the world.

#### Revelation

A brand new heaven and a brand new earth.

Gives us the **Paradise** of God with the Tree of Life and the pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb—Paradise regained through Christ's atonement.

We behold the **second man and His Bride** ruling over a redeemed world.

We see the **Lamb** once slain in the midst of the Throne of God.

That old **serpent** called the devil and Satan, is cast into the lake of fire.

All such, who are rebellious and refuse to accept God's grace in Christ Jesus, are **judged** accordingly, and are banished from His presence forever.

Rejoicing, we contemplate her **doom**.

We see the city of God, the **New Jerusalem!**

This book of Revelation cannot close until we have seen God **wiping away all tears**, and welcoming His redeemed into a home where sin, death, pain and sorrow never again appear.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.christsbondservants.org/Endtime/wys-End%20Comparing%20Genesis%20With%20Revelation.pdf>

## 1. OUTLINE

- Chapters 1-3 the seven churches (typical problems of the churches)
- Chapters 4:1–20:15 progress (“revolution”): seven seals → seven trumpets → seven bowls
- Chapters 21:1–22:5 All things new – the fulfilment of the creation purpose of God

## 2. WHAT IS CERTAIN

### 2.1. MEGATHEMES<sup>3</sup>

(1) God’s Sovereignty, (2) Christ’s Return, (3) God’s Faithful People and their suffering, (4) Judgment, (5) Hope

### 2.2. HISTORY

- Seven letters of Jesus
- (1) Ephesus – first love lost, (2) Smyrna – fear of suffering, (3) Pergamum – tolerating the presence of Nicolaitans, (4) Thyatira – tolerating the teaching of Jezebel, (5) Sardis – the problem of formalism, (6) Philadelphia – persevere in troubles, (7) Laodicea – lukewarmness

### 2.3. DOCTRINES

#### 2.3.1. JESUS, THE LORD

- **Rev 1:12-18** Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup> and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup> The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, <sup>15</sup> his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. <sup>16</sup> In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. <sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup> and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.
- **Rev 19:11-16** Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. <sup>13</sup> He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

#### 2.3.2. CHURCH VICTORIOUS

- In heaven: **Rev 7:9-10** a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"
- On earth: **Rev 19:19-21** And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. <sup>20</sup> And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. <sup>21</sup> And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

<sup>3</sup> *Life Application Study Bible,*

### 2.3.3. *WHAT IS SIN REALLY LIKE*

- **Rev 9:20-21** The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent** of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, <sup>21</sup> nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.
- **Rev 16:9-11** They **did not repent** and give him glory. <sup>10</sup> The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish <sup>11</sup> and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They **did not repent** of their deeds.

### 2.3.4. *THE IMPORTANCE OF HOLINESS*

- **Rev 22:10-11** "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. <sup>11</sup> Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

## 3. **TO REMEMBER**

- Reading Revelation is meant for blessing.
- Reading Revelation helps to hope for victory.
- Reading Revelation gives powerful perspective on sin and holiness.